



Male Adder

The adder is easily recognised by a dark, continuous 'zig-zag' stripe along its back. There is also a row of dark spots along each side. The background colour varies from grey-white in the male to shades of brown or copper in the female.

Adder Bites

- Most adder bites occur between April and July
- Adder venom is a cytotoxic mixture of enzymes; the adder injects this into its prey in order to subdue it before eating it.
- Adders don't just attack but may bite if provoked.

Signs and symptoms of an Adder bite

- In almost all cases there is swelling at the bite site, usually within two hours. Other possible symptoms including pain, bruising, bleeding and lameness.
- If venom is absorbed into the lymphatic system it will cause a widespread inflammatory reaction leading to symptoms such as lethargy, fever, increased heart and respiratory rates, drooling, vomiting and a wobbly gait. (The dog may seem drunk)
- In less than 5% of cases there is severe systemic effects. These include problems breathing, collapse, convulsions, kidney failure, liver injury, bleeding disorders, shock and an abnormal heart rhythm.



Factors that influence severity

- The location of the bite (facial bites are more serious) does influence the speed of recovery.
- The size of the dog (small dogs tend to be more severely affected).
- The amount and potency of the venom (it is thought that the venom is more potent early in the season),
- The amount the dog moves following a bite (movement increases venom uptake into the dogs circulation),

What should you do?

- If your dog is bitten, minimize their movement. Pick the dog up if possible.
- Stay calm, keep the dog calm.
- Call the vet to tell them you are coming.

What will the vet do?

- Intravenous fluid therapy (a drip) and cage rest the dog to minimize venom absorption.
- "If" they have anti venom they will use it. Anti-venom binds to the enzymes within the venom thereby rendering them inactive and unable to cause damage. Anti-venom may be used in all cases but is especially recommended for potentially serious cases. It should be given as soon as possible for maximum benefit and will show a significant reduction in the degree and duration of the swelling.
- **Anti-venom can be difficult to obtain and is not licensed for use in animals in the UK. Not many vets have anti venom, as it must be imported from Europe.!**
- In cases where anti-venom is not to be used your vet may give a steroid injection. This is a potent anti-inflammatory drug
- Adder bites are definitely painful so it is imperative that the dog is given strong pain relievers.





If you urgently need any of the treatments available through the ToxBox service, then call VPIS on 020 7188 0200 *

** Standard VPIS consult fee applies*

